

When You're Close To Me (It's Easier To Breathe)

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When You're Close To Me (It's Easier To Breathe)

by [Spacecadet72](#)

Summary

Aleksander and Alina spend some time together before the Winter Fete, many years after they ascend the throne.

Notes

I have a couple longer Darklina fics in the works, but it was nice to have something short and sweet to finish.

This was inspired by this [bts video](#) of Ben and Jessie dancing while in costume.

I've played fairly fast and loose with technology based on our world, given what year it would be, but since it's a fantasy version of our world, I figure it's all good.

The song they're listening to is [Danse Macabre by Camille Saint-Saëns](#). (Who we'll just pretend is Ravkan.) It was first performed in 1875, which is roughly when I picture the show to be set, if we're going by our historical timeline.

Title from the song Slow Dance by Thomas Lundell.

Alina fought a smile as she saw Aleksander placing a record on the record player out of the corner of her eye. A tailor, Polina, was working on her before that night's Winter Fete. When she and Aleksander had become the Tsar and Tsarina, they had changed many things from the Lantsov's rule, but the Winter Fete, with the common people now invited, was a tradition they had kept on.

Aleksander was already ready, looking devastatingly handsome in his kefta, a more formal one for these kinds of events. As with his keftas for daily wear, there were subtle gold accents to match her own brilliant gold color scheme.

For the Winter Fete, she was wearing a gown made of shimmering gold fabric, with delicate black designs down the bodice. It was beautiful, but she was glad that she had her keftas for regular use.

A sharp note struck the air, and Alina's lips curved up in a smile. Aleksander had been delighted when the gramophone had first been invented decades ago, a team effort between an *otkazat'sya* inventor and a *Fabrikator*. He had made sure they always had a working player in their rooms.

This song was one of Aleksander's favorites. It was playful and mischievous, with a dark and melancholy undercurrent, and she felt that while it may not represent the image he presented as the Tsar, it certainly reminded her of her husband. These more classical pieces were not as popular in Ravka now, but there was something about the music that reminded them of times now past.

She closed her eyes as the music washed over her. It still amazed her that they could listen to music whenever they wanted, no instruments or musicians needed.

"Moya tsaritsa, I am finished," Polina said quietly, and Alina opened her eyes with a smile.

"Thank you, Polina."

She bowed slightly before packing up her things and leaving the room.

Alina turned to the vanity mirror to her right, looking over Polina's handiwork. It was subtle enough that her face still felt like her own, but added something special for the occasion.

There was a flash of movement, dark and quick, in the mirror and a wide smile spread across her lips as she saw Aleksander behind her, dancing along to the music. She watched in the mirror for a few moments. It wasn't how they would be dancing tonight, but he was feeling the music and letting his body express those feelings. He didn't often get to be like this, and it warmed her heart to see him so free. Even a century after they had met, when he was no longer feared as the Black Heretic, he still maintained a stern image to keep their country and people safe. Although he laughed and smiled often, she was still seen as the light to his dark. He could only be this carefree in their chambers when it was only the two of them.

Not satisfied with simply sitting and watching any longer, she stood quietly and padded over to him, grateful for the soft rug beneath her feet to muffle the sound of her slippers and dress against the floor.

"Aleksander?"

He turned, and met her eyes with a smile, no embarrassment in his expression.

"May I have this dance?" she asked, dipping into a low curtsey.

"But, of course, moya tsaritsa," he said, bowing and holding his hand out.

She took his hand, thrilling at the feel of his skin against hers even after all this time together. He pulled her in close, and once they were in position, he began moving them around the room. It wasn't quite a traditional waltz, and she couldn't help a giggle as he spun her out away from him.

As she spun back into his chest, he looked considering. "Surely, we could skip the fete."

She shook her head with a chiding look, knowing he wasn't being serious. "We must at least make an appearance. And really, we should try to stay longer than last year."

"I was not the one who suggested we take a break from the fete," he reminded her.

That was true, and she conceded the accuracy of the statement with a tilt of her head. She had needed to get away from the crush of the crowds, and while they had intended to slip away to their quarters for only a short reprieve, she had pressed her lips to his once they were alone, and they had not returned to the fete.

A knock sounded at the door, and with a sigh, Aleksander pulled away from Alina to answer the door.

"Moi tsar it is time." She could hear Ruslan, Aleksander's heartrender, and echoed Aleksander's earlier sigh. It was time for them to join the throng. She loved her people, and would do what was needed to keep them safe, but she always wished for more time as just Aleksander and Alina.

Aleksander shut the door and returned to her, holding his arm out for her.

"Ready?" she asked as she took it.

He shook his head, a soft smile on his lips. "No, but I suppose we have to be."

She leaned up to press her mouth gently to his, and when he responded in kind, she wished they could have more time together before the fete.

"I shall be right by your side," she said, echoing words from lifetimes ago. The memory of that time no longer held any sting, and she could see it for what it was: part of her history with her husband, and a time that helped shape them both into the people they were now.

“I knew I could count on you to save me,” he said, huffing out a laugh.

“Always.”

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